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Living territories to transform the world

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CHAPTER 3

The territory: a response to the development crisis

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The dynamics described in Chapter 2 are far from being always conducive to sustainable development. Thinking and acting at the territorial level can contribute to development by improving the capacity of local stakeholders to adapt and control their future and, in this way, increase their resilience. The expansion and intensification of trade lead to increased international competition. As a consequence, rural societies in the countries of the Global South are experiencing brutal shocks. Disparities between regions are tending to worsen. Economically efficient production zones with adequate infrastructure, skills and facilities coexist with marginalized areas such as the so-called ‘shadow zones’ in Tunisia. (Tonneau, 2003).

This trend, accelerated by three decades of disengagement by the nation States and structural adjustments in the name of political and economic thinking propagated by the Bretton Woods institutions, has forced major disruptive changes on agriculture and rural territories. National protection mechanisms have been dismantled, aid and subsidies abolished, national regulatory systems loosened, price stabilization funds dissolved, and competition introduced in conditions that are highly variable but always risky. During this period, development policies have been generally designed to stimulate innovation and entrepreneurial freedom, in particular by facilitating private investment and mobility of capital. These policies postulated, on the one hand, that these measures would induce growth and, on the other, that the liberal model underpinning them was an instrument of redistribution for the good of all – subject to compensations for any inequalities and adverse effects caused by these transformations. To put it mildly, this has not always been the case.

Competition effectively pits territories against each other (Lamarche, 2003). The differentiated integration of agricultural producers into the market leads to the structuring of space and produces or amplifies social divides (Tonneau, 2003). The resources invested here are not available for social and environmental policies. Limited redistribution does not successfully fulfil a leveraging or multiplying role.

The resulting tensions underscore the importance of addressing the social and environmental impacts of production. These concerns are at the heart of the challenges of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development¹.

The future for sustainable development seems to be uncertain even though the feelings of crisis and risk and the perception of inadequate regulation have created a broad consensus: it is no longer possible to continue doing 'business as usual'. Combating poverty is no longer just a moral and charitable obligation, but a necessity in order to avoid the collapse of social cohesion and, worse, of identities. But how do we go about it? As far as the environment is concerned, States have become aware of the damage to it and the problems surrounding it, but are unable to imagine the ways, means and tools of public action to address them.

In fact, the questions being asked are themselves changing. What is the capacity to monitor and regulate developments at all levels, local, national and global? How to transform the action of a sometimes ineffective and even corrupt State? How can we rethink the regulatory processes that have been overtaken by the rapid changes taking place and by the political and institutional actions of recent decades? And, in the context of our concerns here, how can the territory and territorial development contribute to a greater resilience of social groups, a better regulation of the observed processes and, ultimately, to sustainable development? It seems to us that there are four main issues to consider in order to answer this last question.

ENSURING THAT THE TERRITORY CONTRIBUTES TO THE TRANSFORMATION OF PUBLIC ACTION

In a context of the weakening, even of crisis, of the nation State described in Chapter 1, the transformation of the State's actions is based on the evolution of forms of public action. This change requires the involvement of multiple actors, not only of those belonging to the State, in the weaving of the 'fabric' of public policies (Duran and Thoenig, 1996). Over the past two decades, two processes have been at work, either separately or simultaneously. The first is the promotion of the exercise of powers by local communities through policies of decentralization and devolution of States or through the policies of territorialization that attempt to include the participation of all territorial stakeholders in management mechanisms. The second is the entry into the political arena of economic and social actors, in particular NGOs and producer organizations in the agricultural domain, through actions to support the direct participation of local populations. Since the 1950s, local development experiments, based on collective action and on the structuring of territories, have frequently been used to manage water resources, control the quality of products, ensure market presence through commercial organizations, etc. These phenomena can be observed in many countries.

1. On 25 September 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a Sustainable Development Agenda for 2030, with 17 Sustainable Development Goals consisting of 169 targets between them in the areas of economics, social development and environmental protection.

At the start of this third millennium, the territorial project can be defined as a set of actions agreed upon by all the actors involved. It appears to be a hybrid object, founded and driven by dynamics of local development and providing content and a framework for action to territorial authorities in search of meaning. It thus strives towards two goals. The first is to acknowledge the willingness of the local populations to take control of their destiny and to better manage the evolutions that affect them (Deffontaines *et al.*, 2001) by refusing, through an endogenous organizational approach, 'the sole logic of the market for generating value from human and natural resources' (Mengin, 1987). The second is to invent and give shape to a new public action in association with structures – which were earlier circumvented – of the decentralized and often disoriented State.

As decentralization progresses, so does the planning of territorial policy. These processes are illustrated, for example, by the management of natural resources (water resources by watersheds, for example) or by the emergence of inter-municipal cooperation for the purpose of managing land in urban and peri-urban situations. Territorial policies have three main characteristics. First, they are planned at multiple levels and seek to link local priorities and demands with management actions planned at the national level by connecting territories with each other, especially rural and urban ones. Second, they try to link and integrate the different sectoral policies, which are often ignorant of one another, within the territorial framework (Losch *et al.*, 2015). Finally, they promote and support the participation of local actors, including at other scales, such as the national or even the global.

Over the past 30 years, this participatory imperative has resulted in specific procedures: participatory budgeting, territorial committees, local consultations, etc. More importantly, the traditional phenomena of local networks or coalitions are reinforced, with the territories' actors demonstrating a growing ability to participate in public action. After a period of circumvention of the State, what is taking place is a reappropriation of territories by the actors and a strengthening of democracies, including in political construction at more inclusive levels, especially at the national level. This is a propitious way to ensure coherence, peace and regulation: in sum, to move towards sustainable development.

ACTIVATING TERRITORIAL RESOURCES AND CAPACITIES

In order to face the challenges of sustainable development, it is not enough to consider the territory as an appropriate scale for rethinking public action. Because it is built historically, connected through social links, and because geographical proximity may often provide an organizational and institutional proximity, the territory can also, under certain conditions, act as a catalyst for the transformation of sectors and economic development. The territory brings together tangible and intangible natural and human assets, which when set into motion give meaning to the processes of development. Such a capacity to constitute a place for the activation of resources and to serve as a platform for new initiatives explains this apparent paradox: in our era of accelerated globalization of information and trade, an unprecedented interest has arisen in local development and territorial dynamics! Indeed, the local and the global

do not really oppose each other, they stimulate each other. Michael Porter (1998) sums up this idea well: 'The enduring competitive advantages in a global economy lie increasingly in local things – knowledge, relationships, motivation – that distant rivals cannot match.' As the world becomes more and more globalized, local issues become increasingly relevant and resonant.

This potential of territorial dynamics is not uniformly expressed. Regions gain while others lose (Benko and Lipietz, 1992; Côté *et al.*, 1995). How can these different itineraries be explained? Industrial economics analyzes the interactions between a local system's actors to assess its collective efficiency. Alfred Marshall (1890) demonstrated that an industrial district (or cluster), i.e., independent, small-scale firms specializing in the same sector, can have an economic efficiency comparable to that of large integrated firms (Fordist model) provided that these firms are clustered together in the same territory and work in relationship with one another (subcontracting, partnerships, etc.). Marshall advanced two explanations. First, the similarity of values and behaviours between actors reduces the costs of market transactions and limits the risks of opportunism (pecuniary externalities). Second, a dense network of relationships between local actors promotes learning processes and the dissemination of uncoded know-how. This stimulates innovation (technological externalities), because innovation is generally the product of a combination of codified knowledge and tacit knowledge (Fournier and Muchnik, 2011).

A virtuous circle of territorial development may then be established, removing obstacles and avoiding failures. At the heart of this process, which will be thoroughly explored and discussed in this book, stands the necessary articulation between three key elements: the notion of territorial resources, the activation of these resources and capacities, and the territoriality of the actors.

The term 'territorial resources' encompasses not only the material resources that a territory contains (such as raw materials or a period of sunshine), but also ideational resources: knowledge and skills shared by the territory's actors; the projects' dynamics; the institutional framework, etc. (Gumuchian and Pecqueur, 2007).

'Activation' of resources and capacities means their engagement in a targeted productive operation. For example, a very abundant 'sunshine period' resource is a constraint for some crops, but can also be activated for a tourism activity, which will become a specific asset of the locality. Similarly, dairy production in a territory can be activated by transforming the milk into cheese using manufacturing capacities and know-how. The asset thus obtained can then in turn become a resource for a new step of activation, for example by creating a safe-food certificate or a territorial label for this cheese. At each step, resources and capacities are thus used to generate value in order to create a new territorial asset (Boucher, 2004).

In this process of activation of resources, it is ultimately the actors' territoriality that matters the most. It counts for more than the territory's spatial delimitation which remains always subject to modification. Territoriality is the actors' ability to assimilate the territory and its resources as a strategic component in the pursuit of their goals. To take the example of the dairy sector, 'territorialized' actors are producers, processors and traders whose future and survival depend closely on the future and survival of

local dairy production. These actors make a distinction between the space in proximity and the rest of the world, not only because of transport costs, but also because, on the one hand, the former is more intelligible to them, with the territory acting as an interpretive filter (Pecqueur, 1996); and, on the other, the building of relationships of trust is facilitated by the existence of shared norms and values.

However, the local is not an attribute that remains unchanged over time. It is the process of localization (or of delocalization) that interests us, i.e., the process of anchoring (or of uprooting) of resources and capabilities *vis-à-vis* a given society and biophysical environment. This requires a better understanding over the long term of how 'localized skills' are built up, that allow not only the continuation of what already exists, but the making of strategic choices and the undertaking of reorientations necessary for sustainable development.

Relatively recent experiments have shown the importance of this return to the local for products where appellations of origin were hardly imaginable *a priori*. An example is the success of Guérande salt in France. In the 1970s, salt workers in crisis took up the challenge of differentiating the quality of their salt, by relying on their knowledge and their region's history and heritage (Muchnik, 2003). Today, 125 grams of 'fleur de sel' from Guérande sell for almost 4 euros, thanks to the meeting of a profession, a location, a product and a supply chain. Similar experiments with salt are now underway in Spain and Portugal.

This territorial anchoring of sectors also pertains to 'the link between the local and the global, between social constructions and local policies, and global regimes' (Biénabe *et al.*, 2017). Research spanning across the territory and the sectors or value chains is essential to apprehend the scale of the challenges of economic, social and environmental development, whether to mitigate the risk of a withdrawal to what is local, or to guard against centralized control by mechanisms of national or international supply chains.

RETHINKING THE MANAGEMENT OF RENEWABLE RESOURCES BY THE COMMONS AND STRENGTHENING THE LINK BETWEEN COLLECTIVE ACTION AND PUBLIC ACTION

The work of Elinor Ostrom, which won her the Nobel Prize in Economics in 2009, has inspired continuing research on the management of resources shared between different stakeholders for different uses (infrastructure, renewable resources – water, forest, even an inhabitable climate). Hardin's (1968) theory of the 'tragedy of the commons' to explain situations of collective overexploitation of a common resource led to the notion of the commons to describe shared resources, managed collectively according to institutions and rules established by the users themselves, in the North as in the South (Ostrom, 1990). All objects of shared use, such as transhumance corridors, local territories and complex ecosystems, are increasingly being recognized and mobilized for territorial planning and development, often to symbolize an alternative to the system of liberal economic regulation (Dardot and Laval, 2014).

Collective land in the Global South is being affected by land appropriation (or land grabbing). Global changes, such as population migrations or shifts in production centres, are changing land use patterns and often leading to the overexploitation, degradation and increased vulnerability of natural resources on which depend the living conditions of millions of people around the world. Infrastructure for managing resources, such as, for example, irrigated perimeters (Chapter 5) or fishing grounds, is unable to absorb the growth in numbers of beneficiaries. The competition that arises as a consequence affects the state of ecosystems and the resilience of the social groups that live in them.

In particular through the forms of governance they generate, the commons constitute a unique form of territorial production. The notion of the commons can contribute to thinking on territorial development challenges, old as well as new, by focusing on the multiple and complex regulations implemented by the actors for managing resources. It also highlights the importance of recognizing the scope of institutional forms designed for managing the commons and which can be mobilized for other actions concerning territorial development.

INTEGRATING THE ACTIONS OF NETWORKS AND TERRITORIES

While the territorial approach is a preferred way of thinking about and implementing sustainable development, socio-spatial phenomena marked by the mobility and flow of people, goods, capital, funds, information, viruses, etc. cannot be analyzed in a framework of a conception of contiguous and demarcated space and its management. Many of these phenomena are best analyzed as networks and do not, in fact, respect spatial boundaries (Négrier, 1989). It is therefore also appropriate to refer to a territory conceived as an arena for various phenomena to occur and act in.

Health (human and animal), biodiversity conservation and national security are traditionally managed through public policy instruments based on territorial categorization. For example, health crises result in zoning and quarantine measures. Management of animal infectious diseases is based on an assessment of risk linked to spatial proximity. It justifies slaughter strategies according to concentric perimeters defined on the basis of the reported outbreak and its risks, or restrictions of movements and marketing of animals, which affect an entire territory.

Similarly, conservation of biodiversity is ensured by the demarcation of parks and nature reserves, protected from external anthropogenic pressures. And national security traditionally relies on the erection and protection of borders aimed at preserving territorial integrity. In all such cases, it is a matter of protecting territories from external threats, through measures ranging from segregation to geographical sequestration. However, this method of management has its limitations. In a globalized world in which exchanges and trade (of individuals, goods, etc.) continue to increase, the threat – health, military, demographic or economic – no longer depends solely on geographical proximity. It also depends on the existence of networks with multiple anchorages (Cortes and Pesche, 2013), such as commercial networks in the case of animal health or terrorist networks in the case of security. Furthermore, protection by

'confinement' now stifles as much as it protects. The management of the last Ebola epidemic is a case in point: border closures and quarantines had consequences not only on the capacity to manage the crisis (difficulties in conveying healthcare personnel and in delivering equipment) but also contributed to an expansion of the health crisis to an economic crisis because of the interruption of trade needed for productive and economic activities, not to mention their social and political impacts (FAO, 2016).

The threats are evolving more rapidly than the tools used to manage them. However, an increasing number of mechanisms to control flows are seeing the light of day and are being used in conjunction with traditional territorial protection tools. In the health sector, for example, traceability tools (Torny, 1998) and sanitary standards make it possible to address individual supply chains and sectors rather than territories, in particular for managing foot-and-mouth disease (Thomson *et al.*, 2013). In the area of biodiversity conservation, mechanisms for connecting territories are emerging – ecological corridors, transboundary parks, etc. (Wolmer, 2003). And in the area of national security, the State has to monitor the fluidity of exchanges as much as it protects the integrity of territories (Gros, 2012).

It is therefore a matter of thinking of territories, in their interrelations and interdependencies, as spaces traversed by flows whose management is outside the scope of a solely territorial approach. CIRAD is contributing to identifying the real consequences of these transformations, in particular in 'marginalized' territories (Andersson *et al.*, 2013 ; Figuié *et al.*, 2015).

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